



DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

News Release

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MR 2004 08

For Immediate Release: April 16, 2004

STATEWIDE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DROPS TO 3.8 PERCENT IN MARCH

Impact of concrete workers strike offset by job gains in other industries

HONOLULU – The State Department of Labor and Industrial Relations announced today that the statewide seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in March fell to 3.8 percent, a decline of 0.4 percentage point over February. The recently settled concrete workers strike that crippled the construction industry and generated a substantial decline in employment in that sector was offset by job gains in several other industries.

Nationally, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate showed little change, going from 5.6 percent in February to 5.7 percent in March. One year ago, Hawaii's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 4.1 percent, while the national seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 5.8 percent.

For reporting purposes, construction employees are grouped under Natural Resources, Mining & Construction industry, which showed a decline of 800 jobs last month on the non-seasonally adjusted job count report. However, there are no official numbers on how many

employees were laid off due to the concrete workers' strike as unemployed workers are not required to report that information when applying for unemployment benefits.

Since March of 2003, the amount of Hawaii's population gaining employment grew by 17,500 for a seasonally adjusted 603,700 persons. During this same time frame, Hawaii's unemployed population decreased by 900 persons for a total unemployed population of 24,200.

"These numbers reflect a business sector that is confident, vibrant, and growing," said Nelson B. Befitel, Director of Labor and Industrial Relations. "Our workforce continues to grow, while the unemployment rate remains consistently low even during the recent concrete workers' strike."

During March 2004, the trade, transportation, & utilities industries added 500 jobs, education & health services rose by 300 workers, and government went up by 600 employees. Leisure & hospitality declined by 200 jobs. Over-the-year, the statewide seasonally adjusted job count has grown by 8,100. The trade, transportation, & utilities series added 2,000 jobs since March 2003. Education & health services and leisure & hospitality employment each expanded by 1,800 jobs compared with a year ago. Government employment remained mostly stable over-the-year, increasing by 200 jobs. Most of the seasonally adjusted industry series' employment increased slightly in March over February.

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